Sixty Years with Plymouth Church

Stephen M. Griswold

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BY

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DEDICATED

To my New England Mother, who long since entered into rest.

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PREFACE

For some years past I have been repeatedly urged to record my recollections of Plymouth Church and Henry Ward Beecher. One after another the original members of the church have passed away until now I am almost alone, so far as the early church connection is concerned, and I have been told that there is really no one left who could give the personal value to such a record. At first, as I thought of the task, it appeared too great. Business duties pressed and left little time for such a work. Then out of the flood of recollections, which should I select? Recently a period of convalescence,

following a somewhat serious illness, during which work was forbidden, gave me leisure which I occupied in recording such incidents as I thought might be of interest and value. These were arranged not in the form of history but as a series of sketches setting forth different phases of the church history and the church life, as well as illustrating Mr. Beecher himself as a preacher and pastor, but still more as a man. These are chiefly personal in their character. Fifty-three years of service as an usher in Plymouth Church brought me into closest touch with those services which have made Plymouth so well known not only in America, but throughout the world. Very precious are those memories to me, and as I have dwelt

upon them, I have felt it not less a privilege than a duty to share them with others and thus bear testimony to a church life of great beauty and power.

Henry Ward Beecher

COMING TO NEW YORK

THE great metropolis of the East has ever had a great attraction for the sons of rural New England, and I was no exception to the rule. In 1851 I made known to my parents my ambition to see and know more of the world, and to this end I purposed to make my way to New York in search of fame and fortune—a wider horizon and a larger life. I had spent my uneventful days thus far on my father's farm, and both he and my mother were filled with dismay at my determination to go to what was, to them, a city of untold lawlessness and

full of pitfalls, where an unsophisticated country youth like myself would be beset with many temptations on every hand, and be led away from the straight and narrow path of his upbringing by his godly parents. And truly the change would be great from the quiet home at Windsor in the beautiful valley of the Connecticut to the stir and bustle and crowds of a great city. So far as success in any business I might undertake or material gains were concerned, my parents were quite sure that the possibilities for advancement were hardly commensurate with the danger of discouragement and complete failure.

However, I had not spoken without careful thought, and when they saw how strongly I felt, and that I

could not be content to live out my days on the farm, they consented to my going, though rather reluctantly; but it was what I wanted, and I did not feel that I was erecting a wall of separation which would shut me out of the home of my childhood; though I little thought how hard it would be to leave it when the time for my departure really came. My mother, following the custom of most New England matrons of those days—I wonder sometimes whether they are as careful now to do the same—placed in my satchel a Bible; and with that and her blessing, on the fourth of August, 1851, I started out to make my way in the world, arriving in New York, a lonely country boy, with no introductions and no one to hold out a helping hand.

Business opportunities were not so varied in character then as they are now, and mercantile pursuits seemed to loom up above every other; American ships were winning fame and fortune for merchants and seemed to me to offer the greatest prizes. For a few days I wandered about the city, going from office to office seeking employment, and before a week had passed I had secured it; going from New York over to Brooklyn and there continuing my quest, I secured a position as clerk in a business house on Atlantic Street.

For a time all went well; the hurry and bustle of the city, all so strange and fascinating to me; the new occupation, calling into play an entirely different line of thought; the new surroundings, all combined to ward

off any feeling of loneliness or homesickness. A few weeks of this, however, sufficed to wear away the novelty, and a full sense of my solitary condition rushed over me; I had made few acquaintances and had practically no society. I began to look around for companions, or at least for some place where I could spend my evenings, when the time dragged most heavily.

It was fortunate for me that just at this point where so many young men are tempted to wander into questionable or even harmful ways, my thoughts were turned in a truly helpful direction. Like every newcomer, I had studied the notices in the papers and on the fences and bulletin boards, and of them all, the one that had the greatest attraction for

me was that of Plymouth Church and Henry Ward Beecher, and I determined that the next Sunday I would find my way to the church and hear him preach, which I accordingly did. The large auditorium of the church was thronged, but I received such a cordial welcome as to make me feel at home, and was at once shown to a seat. That service was a revelation to me, it was in every respect so very different from anything I had ever seen or heard. The singing by the great congregation, the eloquence and withal the helpfulness of the preacher, made a deep impression on me—an impression that stayed with me throughout the week, and I determined to go again the next Sunday. This time I was so fortunate as to meet a young man whom I had

known in Hartford. He was a friend of Dr. Henry E. Morrill, the superintendent of the Sunday School, and through him I was invited to become a member of a Bible Class, an invitation which I was very glad to accept. From this time on I had no reason to complain of any lack of social life. No young man or woman who was in Plymouth Church at this time could fail to find the very best type of society; under the leadership of Mr. Beecher this feature of church life was especially emphasised. The next year I became a member of the church, and from that time, during more than half a century, Plymouth Church has been more to me than I can possibly express.

EARLY PLYMOUTH

AT the time of my coming to Brooklyn, Plymouth Church was but four years old, yet it had already gained a most prominent position not only in Brooklyn and New York, but in the entire country, and indeed was rapidly achieving an international reputation. A brief sketch of its history to this time will not be out of place.

In 1823, when the entire population of Brooklyn was less than ten thousand, and the most densely populated section to-day was but barren fields, two brothers, John and Jacob M. Hicks, bought seven lots

running through from Cranberry to Orange Streets, for the use of "The First Presbyterian Church." Two buildings were erected: a church edifice fronting on Cranberry Street was built at once, and seven years later a lecture room fronting on Orange Street was added. Under the pastorates of Rev. Joseph Sanford, Rev. Daniel L. Carroll, D. D., and Rev. Samuel H. Cox, D. D., the church prospered, and in 1846 the question came up of a more commodious edifice. Learning of this, John T. Howard, at that time a member of the Congregational Church of the Pilgrims, Rev. R. S. Storrs, Jr., pastor, conceived the idea of a new Congregational church in that locality. Conference with David Hale of the Broadway Tabernacle Church, New

York, strengthened him, and he obtained the refusal of the Presbyterian property for $20,000. In September, by the payment of $9500, furnished by Henry C. Bowen, Seth B. Hunt, John T. Howard, and David Hale, the property was secured. The new building of the First Presbyterian Church was not completed until May, 1847, and on the same day that it was opened, May 16, Henry Ward Beecher preached the first sermon in Plymouth Church to audiences that crowded the edifice on Cranberry Street to the doors.

The method of organisation was somewhat unique. The first meeting in the interest of the church was held at Mr. Bowen's house on the evening of May 8, the day before the Presbyterians were to vacate their

old edifice. There were present, besides Mr. Bowen, David Hale, Jira Payne, John T. Howard, Charles Rowland, and David Griffin. On behalf of the owners David Hale offered the property for religious purposes, and it was decided to have services on May 16. Henry Ward Beecher, at that time pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis, who had come to New York for the May anniversaries, had made an address at the meeting of the American Home Missionary Society, and had also spoken elsewhere, winning great popular favour. He was secured for the morning and evening services, and Rev. Mr. Eggleston, of Ellington, Conn., preached in the afternoon. Notice was given of a permanent series of

weekly prayer meetings to be held on Friday evenings, and at the first of these, May 21, a committee, consisting of Henry C. Bowen, Richard Hale, John T. Howard, Charles Rowland, and Jira Payne, was appointed to make arrangements for the formation of a church. They reported on June 11, at which time twenty-one persons signified their intention to join the church, and the next day a council of ministers and delegates met at the house of John T. Howard. The articles of faith, covenant, credentials of the new members, etc., were presented and approved, and on June 13, 1847, the new church was publicly organised, the Rev. R. S. Storrs, Jr., preaching the sermon. The following evening the church by a unanimous vote

elected Henry Ward Beecher to be their pastor. Two months later he wrote from Indianapolis accepting the call. On October 10 he commenced his labours, and on November 11 he was installed. The sermon was preached by Dr. Edward Beecher, other parts being taken by Drs. Nathaniel Hewitt, D. C. Lansing, Horace Bushnell, Rev. R. S. Storrs, Jr., and Rev. J. P. Thompson.

The first winter proved the wisdom of the new enterprise. An interesting revival brought in a large number of new members, and it was not long before it became evident that the buildings were entirely inadequate. There was talk of rebuilding, when a fire, in January, 1849, settled the question by destroying the building. Plans for a new edifice

were drawn, and after some months of worship in a temporary Tabernacle in Pierrepont Street, the present building was entered on the first Sunday of 1850.

It will readily be seen that it was a live church that I joined, and after half a century of experience and observation, I can only thank God that I was brought to connect myself with it. It was not merely the marvellous preaching of Mr. Beecher, which I feel helped me greatly; it was the whole atmosphere of aggressive work. The great audiences, crowding the pews so that aisle chairs had to be put in, was in itself an inspiration; so was also the fine music with John Zundel at the organ and the large choir leading the vast congregation. The cordial social atmosphere that made even

a stranger feel at home also had its share, but more than all these put together, or perhaps better, manifest through all these, was the sense that church life was a means to an end, not an end in itself, and that that end was the building up of a true and noble Christian life in all its different phases. Surely no higher conception of a church's sphere can be found, and to this I believe to be due more than to any other one thing the power of Plymouth Church.

A PLYMOUTH USHER

IT was a little more than a year after I became a member of Plymouth Church that I began my work as an usher, and for fifty-three years I have been identified with Plymouth Church in that capacity. An usher has peculiar opportunities to study human nature, both individually and collectively. His first acquaintance is with the pewholders, and these he quickly learns to distinguish. Plymouth Church was remarkably hospitable from the first. The strangers within its gates usually outnumbered the regular membership, and they represented all classes and

conditions of men, but not more representative were they than the company of those who were the constant attendants on its services—the relied-upon supporters of its enterprises. It was not a wealthy congregation. There were a few men of means; excepting possibly Claflin, Bowen, Sage, Hutchinson, Storrs, Arnold, Graves, Corning, Healy, Bush, Benedict, Dennis, there were no merchant princes or princely bankers. The greater number were earnest, aggressive men who had something to do in life besides make money. Generous whenever generosity was needed, they were for the most part what are called "hard-headed" business men. They were in Plymouth Church, not because it was fashionable to be there, or

because it had the most noted pastor in America, if not in the world, but because they were in sympathy with its purpose and the purpose of its pastor, and felt that there they could best serve their day and generation.

Dominated by this spirit, it was in entire keeping with their habit of thought and action that they should seek to extend as widely as possible the enjoyment of the privileges of their own church life. Hence they were cordial to all visitors to the various religious services, as well as to the social gatherings that were held. It was the general custom in Plymouth, as in most churches, to keep the seats for the regular pewholders until the commencement of the service. Those who were not in their

places at that time had to stand their chances with the guests, and what those chances were may be gathered from the fact that it was usual on Sunday morning to see a line of people standing in front of the church and leading on the one side to Henry Street and on the other to Hicks Street, waiting to be admitted to the service. Still it was very rare that there was any hard feeling, and certainly no expression of it was manifest when pewholders to whom a sermon by Mr. Beecher was the great treat of the week, but who for one reason or another were delayed, found their seats occupied, and were compelled themselves either to stand or withdraw entirely.

The hospitality, too, was thoroughly democratic. It may be

doubted whether any church in the land, not even excepting those of the Roman Catholic worship, gave so genuine a welcome to every sort of people, rich or poor, high or low, educated or uneducated, white, black or brown, as did Plymouth Church. No man, woman, or child was allowed to feel out of place, or unwelcome. That this was and is true, is a notable testimony to the influences that controlled the church from its very beginning.

When we consider the guests, their number and quality, the ushers used sometimes to wonder where they all came from. Truly, the fame of Plymouth had gone into all the world. Travellers visited it, just as they went to Washington or Niagara. It was "the thing" to hear

Henry Ward Beecher in Plymouth Church—usually the two were absolutely identical. Distinguished men from all walks in life, in America and every other country in Christendom, were there. Famous editors, popular ministers, eminent statesmen, great generals, were to be seen in the audience Sabbath after Sabbath. Among those whom I remember were Louis Kossuth, Abraham Lincoln, General Grant, Charles Dickens, Wendell Phillips, Theodore Parker, William Lloyd Garrison, Charles Sumner, the poet Whittier, Horace Greeley, besides a host of others. During the Civil War most of the so-called War Governors, Andrews of Massachusetts, Buckingham of Connecticut, Morgan of New York, Curtin of Penn-

sylvania, and others, were to be seen in the congregation, and it was not an uncommon occurrence to see many of the New England regiments on their way to the field, stop over Sunday and march into Plymouth Church. It had become identified with those higher purposes and deeper principles of the war which appealed most of all to the New England conscience.

Of course there were all sorts of experiences in seating these guests. The ushers soon came to be able to tell where the strangers came from by their form of expression. "Is this Ward Beecher's Church?" invariably betokened an Englishman, as they always called him Ward Beecher in England, and probably more of the foreigners who visit Plymouth come

from there than from any other country. "We are from Canada," is the next most common salutation. "I am a clergyman from Oregon." "I am a missionary from China." "I am from San Francisco and this is my first visit here." "We are from New Jersey, and never heard Mr. Beecher." "I am from Australia and this is my first visit to this country." These are but illustrations of the expressions which greeted the ushers every Sunday.

Of course they all want good seats. It is astonishing how many people come who are hard of hearing, and want front pews; and if they are seated on the left they cannot hear in the right ear, and if on the right, they cannot hear in the left ear. All this was not unnoticed by Mr.

Beecher, as we realised one day when, as he entered the pulpit, he turned to Mr. Whitney, on duty there, and putting his hand to his ear quietly said, "I am very hard of hearing, can you not give me a front seat?" Others, if you give them a front seat, say it tires their eyes to look up, and if they are seated too far back, they cannot see. It is the duty of the usher to satisfy all. That strangers come so constantly is witness to the cordiality and courtesy of their reception and treatment. Mr. Beecher frequently said that the ushers helped him in no small degree in the Sunday services.

The interest for the ushers was by no means finished when the seats were filled and the standing room was apportioned. Then came watching the

effect of the service upon the audience. True, most of the ushers took seats when their special work of introduction was over—*i. e.,* if there were any seats available, or they had succeeded in reserving any; but there were always some on duty, and not even Mr. Beecher's eloquence entirely eclipsed the interest with which the various attitudes were watched. These attitudes were of all sorts. There were sceptical people, who evidently wondered whether this man Beecher was really as great as they tried to make him out; they sat in their seats with a very firm back, indisposed to bend or yield to any influence. As a rule they got little farther than the prayer or the second hymn before there was a very perceptible unbending. Somehow few could

withstand the power of Plymouth Church singing, and Mr. Beecher's prayers had a wonderfully moving influence. The sermon, however, captured all. If asked what it was that had conquered they perhaps could not have told, but sure it was that the shoulders shook, the head bent forward, the whole frame seemed to respond to the touch of the master hand. Especially interesting was it to watch the young men. Students came from all over the country to hear the "greatest pulpit orator" in the land. All sense of surroundings was lost, and bending forward, with eye fixed on the speaker, and even the mouth open, as if in fear of closing any possible avenue by which the thought might enter mind and heart, they listened

with an intensity of attention that can scarcely be measured.

The general bearing of the audience was always reverential. There was none of the solemn formality seen in a good many churches. To some people it doubtless savoured more of a lecture hall than of a church. The form of the auditorium was the reverse of the stately Gothic. There was no dim religious light. Plenty of windows let in plenty of light and plenty of fresh air. The pews were comfortable. Under any other preacher they might have conduced to decorous naps. There was no excess of dress. People wore clothes for comfort, not for show, and if perchance they commenced with style they invariably ended with simplicity.

There was, too, a breezy sort of cheeriness about the whole place. Quiet, friendly chatting between friends went on, but it was never obtrusive, or interfered with devotion. The moment service commenced it was manifest that it was divine service, not a public entertainment. Mr. Beecher was a wonderful reader, and to hear his rendering of a chapter in the Bible, or of a hymn new or old, was in itself a great privilege. During the prayer there was a stillness that could be felt. Few men have greater, or as great a gift in bringing men to the recognition of their communion with God.

With the sermon there was evident a general attitude of expectancy. Something was coming, and everyone wanted to be sure and get it.

Sometimes it was humorous, and a ripple of laughter would go over the audience. Those who heard about it were apt to be shocked and to consider it irreverent. It is doubtful whether anyone who was present ever had that feeling. Sometimes it was pathetic, and there was suspicious fumbling in pockets. Sometimes it was soul-stirring, and one could see the forms quiver and grow tense. Most often it was that calm, quiet, yet forceful presentation of truth, not in the abstract as something to be looked upon from various angles, then labelled and put aside, but practical, affecting the daily life; and faces would grow earnest, and the results would be seen in the home, the shop, or the office.

Service over, Plymouth Church

people gathered in knots to chat over —pretty much everything, for it was like one big family. Strangers looked on with curiosity, generally appreciative, less often with a certain air of disapproval at the apparent levity. One thing was noticeable: those who came once generally came again at some time, and so faces that had been strange came to wear a familiar look.

PLYMOUTH SERVICES

FEW, if any, churches in the country, certainly none in Greater New York, preserve the old-time simplicity of the typical New England Congregational Church as distinct as does Plymouth Church. The building itself, with no steeple, the form of its auditorium, unusual at that period in a church, the arrangement of its pews, all were indeed innovations, and they have been followed, though hardly improved upon, in building other church edifices. When it comes to the conduct of worship, however, it is severe in its simplicity. There is the opening hymn shared by

the congregation, a short invocation, reading of the Scripture, then the offering, and while it is being received an anthem is sung by the choir.

The "long" prayer is followed by a hymn; but the chief feature of the entire service is always the sermon, after which comes a hymn and the benediction. The evening service followed the order of that of the morning. Of elaborate liturgies there has been no hint, yet the service has ever been both impressive and interesting. People explained it at first by the peculiar power of the man who occupied the pulpit, yet this can hardly account for its continuance to the present day in its original form. The succeeding pastors have continued the

plan, not because Mr. Beecher started it or perhaps because they themselves preferred it, but because it seems to fit Plymouth Church, and is enjoyed by Plymouth congregations. Somehow a liturgy would seem entirely out of place there, however appropriate it might be elsewhere, and not only is this recognised, but there seems to have been at no time any desire to make the service more elaborate.

When it comes to the conduct of the different parts of the service, however, there was nothing humdrum, or that savoured of routine. Mr. Beecher was a remarkable reader. Delicate shades of meaning came out in the very tones of his voice, and his power of intense sympathy made it easy for him to impersonate for the

time being almost any character. Had he turned his attention to the stage he would have been a wonderful actor. As he read the Scriptures the Bible characters stood out with marvellous distinctness; we could almost see them or hear them. He entered also so fully into the deepest meaning of what he read that the rendering shed new light on some of the most difficult passages of the Bible. Attention has more than once been called to his rendering of those verses in which the Saviour speaks so strongly of the Scribes and Pharisees. He would read them as if they were fairly afire with indignation and wrath; then, softening his voice, read them again with an infinite pathos, as if they were prophecy rather than condemnation, and ask which ren-

dering was more in accord with the nature of Jesus.

The same thing was manifest in his rendering of hymns. He was extremely fond of poetry, and searched far and wide for the best hymns. Our first hymn book was a little one known as Temple Melodies. Mr. Beecher could not get along with this, and with the aid of his brother, Rev. Charles Beecher, and the organist, John Zundel, compiled and published the Plymouth Collection. This long held its place at the head of church hymnals and really worked a revolution in church music.

To many the feature of the whole service was the "long prayer," as it was called. Many who could not quite agree with all the conclusions and statements of the sermons found

these prayers of wonderful help. The same sympathy that made his rendering of Scripture so effective became very apparent when he took up the problems of daily life, the perplexities, doubts, temptations, successes. Probably no preacher has ever had such wide publication of his prayers as Mr. Beecher, and the Book of Prayers from Plymouth Pulpit became a source of spiritual strength to many who could not attend the services. They were taken down in shorthand, as were his sermons, and published, appearing first in the *Christian Union* and then in book form.

The sermon needs no description from me—even if I could give it. It seemed the very expression of the man, his interpretation of himself,

Mr. Beecher was to all appearance well-nigh reckless in the vigour with which he made statements that seemed to him to be true, with little or no regard to their relation to other truths. The result was that he was charged with being grossly inconsistent. One day he would preach a sermon that would have delighted the old New England divines. The next Sunday he seemed an out-and-out Unitarian, while Quakers, Swedenborgians and all sorts of beliefs claimed him. The explanation was that he saw very clearly the element of truth in any system, whether he agreed with it in full or not, and in his effort to state it plainly and give due credit to it, often left the impression that the particular statement he made was all there was to it. One result was that

the independent forming of opinions was encouraged and helped in Plymouth Church as in few churches. Those who imagined that Mr. Beecher dominated the thought of his people to an extent which made them mere echoes of himself were very far from the truth. It was an intellectual stimulus to sit under him, not merely in the effort to keep up with his thought, which poured forth like Niagara, but in the compulsion to form an independent personal opinion. Men loved to hear him, not so much because they always agreed with him as because he had the faculty of stimulating the best there was in them, arousing their highest ambitions.

In no single service was Mr. Beecher at his best so completely as in the communion service. It was

distinctively a family gathering in which the host was not Mr. Beecher, or Plymouth Church, but the Saviour, and to it were welcome all who loved that Saviour, whatever their formal creed or church connection, or even if they were without any creed or connection; this was the impression left upon those who came from other churches, and this was the description of it given me by a theological student, who said that he came from a distant city to Brooklyn and timed his visit primarily with reference to that service and especially to Mr. Beecher's invitation as given by him from the pulpit. In these days there is nothing very startling in that position, but in the earlier times it was regarded as a very unsafe liberality, even if not absolutely wrong.

As I have already said, the music of Plymouth Church has always been an important part of the church worship. The high-priced quartet has never been relied upon, the chorus choir being preferred, not merely for its own singing, but because it served best in leading the congregation, and that was the thing ever kept in mind. Mr. Beecher loved the old-fashioned hymns, though he had also a hearty welcome for new ones, and he was never satisfied unless he got everybody to singing. I have often seen him jump up from his chair right in the middle of a hymn and hold up his hand for silence. "You are not singing this hymn right," he would say. "Sing it with more spirit, and let everybody sing." The effect upon the congregation would be electric,

and after that the church would fairly tremble with the volume of music the audience would pour forth. The result has been that it has always been the fashion for everybody in the congregation, strangers as well as members, to sing, and this undoubtedly has had a share in doing away with coldness and formality in the service.

All this, however, could not have been accomplished without the cordial sympathy and positive help of many great organists and leading singers. There have been more famous musicians engaged for Plymouth Church Choir during the past fifty years than in any other church in this country, if not in the world. Among the names I may mention are Zundel, Burnet, Stebbins, Wheeler, Thursby,

Toedt, Sterling, Lasar, Damrosch, Warrenwrath, Camp, and many others. Of them all probably John Zundel came the nearest to Mr. Beecher's ideal. He entered heartily into all the preacher's ideas and feelings and seemed to understand just how to interpret him in music; Mr. Beecher used to say that he inspired his sermons. It has not been surprising that even with the inevitable changes brought by time, there have been but few intervals, and those very brief, from the organisation of the church up to the present time, when the music has not been of the highest order, and the standard of to-day is in no respect inferior to that of the past.

Among my earliest recollections of Mr. Beecher's preaching was the pro-

fusion of his illustrations from nature. Every part and manifestation of nature had its place, but so frequent were his references to flowers that it became a common saying among members of Plymouth Church that " Mr. Beecher must be very fond of flowers." He seemed to know every flower in the garden or in the field, and was constantly drawing lessons from them or using them in some way to enforce a point.

One Sunday morning, I think it was in 1852, someone sent him a small bouquet in a vase. He took it to church with him, placed it on the little table at his side, and there it remained during the service. It is difficult in these days to understand what a commotion it occasioned. Such a thing as bringing flowers into

a church on the Sabbath day had never been heard of, and was not at all in accord with traditional New England ideas. Everyone in the congregation of course noticed it, and that bouquet of flowers became during the week the talk of all Brooklyn.

There were not a few who were alarmed at Mr. Beecher's rapidly growing popularity, and who made a point of finding fault with everything he did. These declared that Henry Ward Beecher had desecrated the House of God by taking flowers into the pulpit during religious worship! This, however, affected neither Mr. Beecher nor the church. Flowers on the pulpit had come to stay, and stay they did, and now are recognised as a legitimate part of church service all over the world.

PLYMOUTH MEMBERS

PLYMOUTH CHURCH was born in days of strife. It was natural that the militant element should be dominant. The very way in which the church was organised was illustrative of their methods. The prompt improvement of the opportunity to buy the property, the meeting one week, the opening of services the next week, the organisation of the church, the calling of the council, the invitation to Mr. Beecher to be their pastor, all in quick succession, were characteristic.

Mr. Howard was one who naturally foresaw the possibilities for

the future, and thus came into leadership in the origin of the enterprise. Once started, however, the initiative and the dominating influence belonged to a group of men, of considerable note at the time as being closely identified with the anti-slavery agitation, and who were out of patience with what they considered the time-serving policy of too many of the churches, and particularly of the various benevolent and missionary societies: Henry C. Bowen, Richard Hale, Arthur and Lewis Tappan. These were in business, chiefly dry goods, and had large connections with the South. As the strife grew more severe, complaints grew, and finally the Southern merchants drew up a list of Northern merchants with whom they would have no dealings. All four of these men were on that

list. Mr. Bowen's partner, Mr. McNamee, was one with him, but it was Mr. Bowen in particular who sent the famous retort, when urged to cater to his Southern constituency:

"Our goods are for sale, but not our principles."

He, as others, suffered for this, but the only effect it had was to strengthen them in the position they had taken. The American nation owes a debt of gratitude to the patriotic New York merchants who stood for liberty and their country in these perilous times. Among the first were A. T. Stewart, Simeon B. Chittenden and H. B. Claflin.

It was natural under the circumstances that the early history of the church should have been very much controlled by these men. Of them all, Mr. Bowen was perhaps the most

aggressive and the most of a leader. He was the first superintendent of the Sunday School, and had much to do with the plans for and the erection of the present church building. A man of very positive convictions and great executive ability, he did what he did with his might. The same characteristics went into his conduct of *The Independent,* of which he was one of the founders in 1848. While the fame of its editors, Henry Ward Beecher, Joseph P. Thompson and Richard Salter Storrs, went far and wide, not a little of the success of the paper was due to his general management, and to his hearty indorsement of the position of his editors, however radical they were—indeed the more radical the better. Later, when he acquired entire con-

trol, these characteristics were still more manifest.

Another prominent man was Austin Abbott, brother of Dr. Lyman Abbott, a well-known lawyer, and one who was closely identified with the defence of Mr. Beecher in his famous trial. Well do I remember him as he first came, a boy, and took his seat in the west gallery. Then there were Henry M. and Augustus Storrs. The former was an intimate friend of Horace Greeley and used to travel about with him in his political tours. Both were warm friends of Mr. Beecher, but Augustus was specially active; it was at his house in Sidney Place that many of the meetings for consultation were held. Robert R. Raymond came to Brooklyn from Boston and brought the

classic atmosphere, combined with a most emphatic manner, to his professor's work in the Polytechnic Institute. He was one of the comparatively few who took part in the prayer meetings, which generally were really lecture talks by Mr. Beecher. He seemed to think that a literary atmosphere would certainly do no harm, for his favourite subject was Shakespeare, and he frequently read lengthy extracts from his plays. He became widely known as a student and reader of Shakespeare. His son, Rossiter Raymond, will be mentioned later.

Robert S. Bussing was specially interested in the Bethel Mission; at first it was independent, but afterwards became a regular part of Plymouth Church work. General Ho-

ratio C. King was among the leaders in somewhat later days. A son of Horatio King, United States Postmaster-General under Buchanan, he always identified himself with the various reform movements, especially the anti-slavery ones, and was thus in hearty sympathy with Mr. Beecher and Plymouth Church in its activities, and has for many years served as clerk of the church. Always interested in music, he was a fine organist and helped materially in that department of church worship. Another whose name became very widely known, especially at the time of the trial, was Thomas G. Shearman. He was also identified with every phase of church life, was clerk for many years, and an active and most loyal upholder of pastor and church.

For the most part these were not very wealthy men, though Augustus Storrs was esteemed such, and Mr. Bussing at one time had a large income. There were a few, however, of large means, and they gave most liberally: Horace B. Claflin, Rufus R. Graves, and Henry W. Sage. Mr. Sage will long be remembered for his generous gifts to Cornell University, and was always looked to for cordial support of any good cause in Brooklyn. Horace B. Claflin as founder of the great H. B. Claflin Company was not less munificent, though often in ways less prominent before the public, and the same may be said of Mr. Graves. These with Mr. Storrs were always bidders for the highest priced pews, paying premiums varying from $3000 to $5000 each.

While present days are not so strenuous as those early years, and modern conditions scarcely develop individual influence in church life of as great intensity as the times of conflict, Plymouth to-day has a large and influential company of men identified with its life. Among them General Horatio C. King, already spoken of, and Professor Rossiter W. Raymond, are some of the links connecting the present with the past. No one who has listened to Professor Raymond's explanations of Scriptures or heard his talks in the meetings fails to realise his power in the church life. "Deacon" Stephen V. White has long been a well-known member, as liberal as he is loyal; so too are John Arbuckle, the coffee merchant, Henry Hentz and Henry

Chapin, Jr. Mr. Beecher is represented by his son, William C., and the Howard family is still well known in Plymouth.

Mention of even a few would include Benjamin F. Blair, Walter L. Wellington, F. G. Corning, son of Rev. J. L. Corning, one of the early members, George W. Mabie, T. W. Lauterdale, Philip M. Knight, Geo. W. Bardwell, Elijah R. Kennedy, Frank M. Brooks, Horace D. Sherrill, Jas. A. Brodie, Chas. N. Judson, Terance Jacobson, Dr. Wm. Morris Butler, Chas. H. More, Clarence B. Wisner, Wm. Foster, Benjamin F. Webb, H. Edward Dreier, Amos D. Carver, Wm. E. Davenport, W. F. Osborne, H. A. Garthewait, A. K. Powell, Frederick W. Starr, Louis N. Chapin, Dwight Studwell, Henry

Sanger Snow, A. Stanwood, Seabury N. Haley, Wm. Tupper, Frederick W. Heinrich, H. W. Wheeler, M. C. Ogden, John H. Jackson, George A. Price, W. P. Long, Mr. Carpenter, Mr. Ramsay, Mr. Kenyon, Mr. Smith, Mr. Bingham, Mr. Ayers, Mr. Aderley, and many others.

BUYING A SLAVE GIRL

IT is impossible to understand accurately the early history of Plymouth Church, and realise the position it held in the country, as well as its influence over its members, without some knowledge of the general history of the times. It was a period of great political ferment. The slavery question was looming up as the "irrepressible conflict." The war with Mexico, at its height when the church was organised, precipitated the discussion as to the extension of slave territory. The discovery of gold in California (February, 1850) opened up possibilities of na-

tional growth undreamed of before, and which stirred the greatest ambitions, especially in the slave states. The passage of the fugitive slave law (September, 1850) was but fuel to the flame. Into the discussions of the time two Congregational ministers threw themselves with all the ardour of their natures, and exceptional ability—Henry Ward Beecher, of Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, and Joseph P. Thompson, of Broadway Tabernacle, New York. Nor did they lack for hearty support by their churches. The men who stood behind them were equally in earnest with themselves. The pulpits—or rather platforms—of both were free for the presentation of the cause of justice and liberty, and many scenes in them have become historic.

On one occasion the Broadway Tabernacle, at that time located on Broadway near Duane Street, was opened for a mass meeting. Mr. Beecher was advertised to speak, and the house was packed. He was listened to with closest attention and deepest interest, but the climax came when turning round he lifted a chain that had been taken from a slave in the South, held it for a moment high above his head, then dashed it to the floor, placed his foot upon it and said: "In this way we propose to deal with the slave power in the South." The effect upon the audience was thrilling and the applause fairly rocked the building.

Another scene, which none who witnessed it could ever forget, was in Plymouth Church. It was Sabbath

morning, and as usual every seat and all the available standing room was filled. After the sermon Mr. Beecher said that he had a matter which he wished to present to the congregation. No one had the least idea as to what he was going to do, and the people waited in profound silence. He then said, "Sarah, come up here." As the audience looked, a little mulatto girl arose in the body of the church, ran up the pulpit steps and took Mr. Beecher's hand. Turning to the assembled multitude he said: "This little girl is a slave, and I have promised her owner $1200, his price for her, or she will be returned to slavery. Pass the basket."

The ushers found their way through the vast audience. Although the church seated only a little more

than two thousand, there must have been nearly three thousand present, and soon the collection was made. It appeared that the sum total was not far from fifteen hundred dollars. Many gave jewelry, diamonds, watches and chains. Her freedom was announced amid thunders of applause. This was not the only instance of a similar nature. Mr. Beecher was frequently condemned for even in form acknowledging the right of a slave owner to any remuneration for a slave, but if he thought a thing right to do, he did it without the least regard to what other people might say.

There was probably no one question at the time about which there were more intensely opposing opinions, than this one of the return of

slaves. Congress had passed the fugitive slave law, and all lawyers and students of the Constitution affirmed not merely its legality, but its justice, at least its technical justice. To a large number, however, the fact that it was legal made no difference so long as they were convinced that it was morally wrong. Among these was Mr. Beecher, and he had the cordial support of the people. One result was the formation all through the North of a system, known as the Underground Railroad, by which slaves escaping from the South were helped on their way until they could reach Canada, when they were free. It was no secret that some of the men in Plymouth Church knew a good deal about this railroad, and were deeply interested in helping men,

women and girls to escape from bondage.

The first national event in which the church took a definite part, so far as I remember, was the question as to whether Kansas should be a free or a slave state. Settlers were rushing in from all parts of the country, and the North was favouring those who were opposed to slavery, while the South sought to strengthen the slave-holding element. The result was a constant clashing, resulting in what came to be known as the Border Ruffian War, in which John Brown first appeared as a national figure. In the difficulty of provisioning such a new country, all sorts of supplies were rushed in, including ammunition and Bibles. Mr. Beecher told his congregation that just then

a Sharps rifle was as good a missionary to send as a Bible. Accordingly the church purchased and boxed up several cases of rifles and Bibles and sent them out. These rifles were afterwards called Beecher Bibles.

The events that followed, leading up to the War of the Rebellion, were all part of Plymouth Church life. It seemed sometimes as if Mr. Beecher was everywhere and nothing could be done without him. At the time when Senator Brooks in the United States Senate made his unprovoked attack on Charles Sumner, the whole country was wild with indignation. Meetings were held on every hand to protest against the outrage. Every item of news from Mr. Sumner's bedside was watched for with intense solicitude, and for a time it seemed as if

the fate of war or peace hung upon the life of the Senator. Among the meetings was one called to take place in front of City Hall, Brooklyn, and, as so often was the case, Mr. Beecher was the speaker. The Square was packed, and as he came out on the steps of the City Hall to speak a great cheer went up, a cheer not merely of sympathy for Mr. Sumner, but of faith in and regard for the speaker. Mr. Beecher, with his marvellous power, raised his voice so that it could be heard all over the Square, and for an hour he held the audience spellbound with his arraignment of the slave power of the South, and the wrongs it was committing, while he affirmed his conviction that the conflict would result in a storm of civil war. It was a wonderful illustration

of the inspiration that made him great.

A very different, yet not less characteristic, scene was that in the lecture room of the church one Friday evening, when the news of the death of John Brown had come. Looking back over the years it is easy to see that his attempt with a mere handful of men to free the slaves of the South was a most foolish thing. Yet at that time so keen was the realisation of the wrongs that slavery had committed and so hearty the respect for the nobility of his purpose and of his character, that from all the land there went up one general expression of sympathy. The seriousness of the situation appears in the fact that the State of Virginia felt obliged to call out a large number of troops on the

day of his execution to quell any popular disturbance. The day of the execution was Friday, and as the audience crowded the room, it was easy to see that there was but one thought in the minds of all. Mr. Beecher came in and took his seat upon the platform, a strange and unusual expression on his face, indicating the intensity of the feeling within. After one or two short prayers, and a couple of hymns, one after another gave expression to his sorrow and amazement at the condition of things between the North and the South, and through all there was manifest the conviction that war and bloodshed were sure to come. The meeting was long and earnest, showing the deep impression made on the people of the church.

MR. BEECHER IN ENGLAND

THE most critical time for the North during the Civil War was when it was thought that England would recognise the Southern Confederacy. The close relations between the cotton manufacturers of England and the vast cotton producers of the South created a public sentiment in England in favour of the slave states. The feeling on both sides was intensified by the "Trent Affair." Two Confederate envoys, sent to Europe to secure the recognition of the Confederacy, were taken from the British steamship *Trent* by a United States man-of-war. Great

Britain, which had declared neutrality and thus granted the Confederacy the rights of belligerents, demanded their surrender. Feeling in the North ran very high, and there were most vigorous protests against yielding to the English demands. The President and his advisers, however, realising that the arrest of the two envoys tallied very closely with the English actions that had brought on the War of 1812, concluded that it was wiser to avoid so far as possible any occasion for interference on the part of Europe, and returned the envoys. Their arrival in England and their setting forth of their side of the conflict was a signal for a great increase of hostility to the North, and the pressure from the industrial centres became so great that probably

only the steadfast friendship for the North of the Queen's husband, Prince Albert, averted what would most certainly have been a great calamity. Even Mr. Gladstone had expressed his conviction that the success of the Southern States, so far at least as regarded their separation from the North was concerned, was "as certain as any event yet future and contingent, could be." Even the Emancipation Proclamation did not suffice to open the eyes of many to the real issues, and there was a widespread feeling that some way must be found to present the cause of the North in such a manner as to reach the English conscience and genuine love of liberty.

In the summer of 1863 Mr. Beecher had been sent to Europe for

a rest. On his return he came to England, and immediately there arose a general demand for him to represent America. His marvellous success in the anti-slavery campaign preceding the Civil War, his widespread popularity, and particularly his power over audiences, made many look to him as the providential ambassador. He demurred at first, but at last yielded.

When he arrived in London, Manchester, and Liverpool, where great mass meetings had been arranged for him to address, he found that every effort had been made to discredit him, by huge posters placed throughout the country asking: "Who is Henry Ward Beecher? He is the man who said the best blood of England must be shed to atone for the Trent affair.

Men of Manchester, Englishmen, what reception can you give this man? He is the friend of General Butler. He is the friend of that so-called gospel preacher, Cheever. His impudence in coming here is only equalled by his cruelty and impiety."

The meeting at Liverpool was announced as follows. "At a meeting held in New York at the time when the Confederate envoys, Messrs. Mason and Slidell, had been surrendered by President Lincoln to the British Government, from whose vessel (the Royal Mail Steamer *Trent*) they were taken, the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher said, This act will demonstrate the unfeeling selfishness of the British Government and bring us to a realisation of our national humiliation. This opinion comes from

a Christian minister who wishes to obtain a welcome in Liverpool, where operatives are suffering almost unprecedented hardships caused by the suicidal war raging in the States of North America, and which is being urged on by fanatical statesmen and preachers of the North!"

These posters and notices of the press had so inflamed the public mind that when Mr. Beecher entered the great halls in Liverpool, Manchester and London, he had to face a howling mob. When he arose to speak, the tumult and hisses made it impossible for him to be heard. Calmly he stood and faced the storm like a giant oak for a period of one hour to one hour and a half, at each one of these three great meetings,

before the audience would listen to anything which he said; gradually sentence after sentence began to reach them, and here Mr. Beecher showed his great power as an orator. He slowly quieted the mob until they listened to every word he said, and when he closed, the applause which greeted him was greater than the groans and the howling with which he had been received. He had met the enemy and conquered.

He had an easy road afterwards in following up this victory, speaking in different towns and cities all over England, and everywhere the people received him with respect and enthusiasm. By degrees he succeeded in slowly changing the opinions of the people from favouring the cause

of the Confederate States to indorsing the struggle of the North for Union and Liberty. Returning to London before sailing for America, he was received with great honours by the most noted men in that city, including royalty. Dinners, breakfasts, and receptions followed one another in quick succession until he took his departure.

Upon his return home he was tendered a great reception in the Academy of Music, Brooklyn. The people of the North had been watching every step of his course in England with deep anxiety, for it was a serious time in the history of this nation. The service which he rendered his country at that time earned the gratitude of the American Government and people, and made him the

most popular man of the North. I may add that this period of Mr. Beecher's life was the one of his greatest power and influence, and marked one of the greatest epochs in his history.

THE BEECHER TRIAL

FOLLOWING the Civil War came the reconstruction days, and into all those experiences Mr. Beecher entered with full energy, but even more than before he devoted himself to his work as a preacher and writer. He was in demand everywhere for addresses and lectures, as well as for articles from his pen. Churches, lyceums, theological seminaries, public meetings of all sorts tried to secure him. He took up editorial work on the *Christian Union,* now *The Outlook;* he gave the first of the famous series of lectures on "Preaching," at Yale

Theological Seminary. Indeed, it seemed as if he was ubiquitous. How he got time for it all was a marvel, even to those who best knew his great powers of endurance, and his marvellous capacity for work. In it all Plymouth Church never suffered. Its interests were his first care, and while it was never selfish or unwilling that others should share their advantage, he was faithful to what he esteemed his first duty.

Thus was built up a strength of mutual confidence, and affection, that was to be tested in as severe a way as could well be imagined. That the test was borne and that both pastor and people came out of it, not merely with no loss of mutual esteem and honour, but with the vigour of church life unimpaired,

indeed strengthened, is but another testimony to the genuine force of Christian character in both.

No survey of Plymouth Church during its history can ignore the famous trial, or rather series of trials, in which both the church and its pastor were subjected to an ordeal of the severest type. Into the details there is no necessity of going, neither is there advantage in reviewing arguments. The actors are fast passing away. Those now coming on the stage have little concern with any results except those made manifest in the life of Plymouth Church, and which may be taken as illustrating its character.

As for Mr. Beecher himself, he needs no vindication. The verdict of his city, which has honoured him as

it honours few men, is sufficiently clear. So also is that of the churches and the great mass of Christian men and women over the country. He was undoubtedly indiscreet, yet not in the way that most charged indiscretion. Open, above board, frank, generous, he trusted others, and, as Dr. Abbott has said, accepted "as true, without inquiry or investigation, statements which a man of more practical wisdom would certainly have doubted." Good men and true found it in many cases difficult to understand his course. Those who believed in him can afford to await until the limelight of the highest of all courts shall pass its verdict.

Of more immediate value to those interested in Plymouth Church was its bearing in such circumstances,

and the results as manifested in its life. It is to be remembered that there were really three trials: 1. An investigation by Plymouth Church, commencing in June and closing in August, 1874; 2. A trial before the civil court, from January 5 to July 2, 1875, brought by Mr. Tilton on the charge of alienating his wife's affections; 3. A council of Congregational Churches, called by Plymouth Church to review its action in regard to its pastor. The first investigation was presented, in its method, evidence and results, to a meeting of the church. After full public notice and by a unanimous vote of about fifteen hundred members, practically the entire resident membership, Mr. Beecher was awarded the perfect confidence of the church. The civil

trial resulted in a disagreement of the jury, but the chief lawyer for the prosecution and the presiding judge both publicly affirmed their absolute conviction in Mr. Beecher's innocence. The Council was the largest and most representative ever known in the history of the Congregational Churches. Over two hundred and forty men from every part of the country, holding every phase of theological beliefs and of ecclesiastical habit, met together, and for days investigated, considered, questioned, with a freedom impossible in strictly legal procedure, and closed their sessions with formal reaffirmation of Mr. Beecher's innocence, no charge against him having been sustained by any proof.

While it is thus true that Mr.

Beecher and the church came forth triumphant, it was at heavy cost. No man could endure such a strain without showing the effects of it, and Mr. Beecher never recovered the old buoyancy. In many ways it became evident how keenly he felt the trial. The church showed the effect less. A few, very few, members left the church, but the number of dismissions was not larger than usual; indeed they were less than in the previous two years, and the church remained the more united. The admissions by letter were exceptionally large, as were also those by confession of their faith. More pertinent, however, than these evidences of life is the fact that the entire work of the church suffered no interruption. Prayer meetings, Sunday School,

continued with usual vigour, and the general activities of the congregation were carried on as if there was nothing unusual taking place.

It was this that aroused the attention of the country at large and convinced many that the basis of the real power of Plymouth Church lay not so much in any oratorical gifts of its pastor, as in the substantial Christian life of its members. Those who could hold together under such a strain were not likely to fall apart under the pressure of any lesser difficulty. Undoubtedly there was a certain amount of *esprit de corps,* a realisation of the absolute necessity of mutual support, but to those who look back on those days it is still more evident that they felt that more than Mr. Beecher, or even Ply-

mouth Church, was at stake; it was the ability of a company of Christian men and women to hold their faith, and the expression of their faith.

So far as their personal interest and faith in Mr. Beecher were concerned, nothing could illustrate it better than the action of the society in helping him to meet the extraordinary expense, and the visit to his home in Peekskill of the members of the three Sunday Schools. While Mr. Beecher had a most liberal salary, he was free and even reckless in expenditure. The result was that the cost of the trial went far beyond his resources. At its close, and even before he had had time to realise what that cost had been, the society which has charge of the finances of

the church, met and voted that his salary for that year be one hundred thousand dollars. It was a great relief to him financially, but still more grateful as a taken of the love and confidence of the people. Not less touching to him was the tribute from the Sunday Schools.

He was at the time living in his summer home at Peekskill, N. Y. Without any knowledge on his part, until the very day, it was arranged by the teachers and officers of the Plymouth, Bethel and Mayflower Schools that the scholars should go to Peekskill to congratulate him on the outcome of the trial, and emphasise the feeling of the church already expressed in the salary grant. The steamer *Blackburn* was chartered and about three hundred joined in the ex-

cursion up the North River. Mr. R. D. Jaques, an old, active and honoured member of the church, describing the scene, says that Mr. Beecher met them standing under a tree, his hat off and his long hair flowing in the wind. The visitors formed in line so that each could shake his hand. As the little ones came, Mr. Beecher would lift them up in his arms and kiss them. Then the house was thrown open and they were welcomed to every part of it. Refreshments were provided and the social festivities continued until the time came to return. It was a happy company that sailed down the river, but it is doubtful whether anyone was happier than the host, as he realised what the visit meant of their love and honour.

THE CHURCH TESTED

ON March 8, 1887, a little less than forty years after he had been called as pastor of Plymouth Church, Henry Ward Beecher died. The end came suddenly. There was no lingering sickness, no wasting of his powers. If the impassioned delivery of earlier years was somewhat lacking, there was still a power and vigour fully as effective. The year before he had been to England on a lecture tour and received an ovation as marked as the disapproval attending his first attempts. He had been in demand all over the country for addresses and lectures. The columns

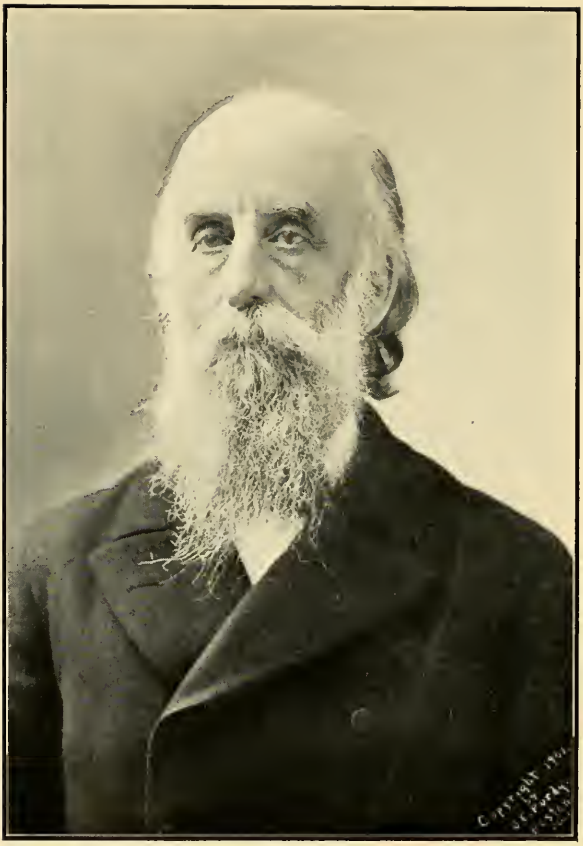
of papers and magazines were everywhere open to him, and while it may be true that his popularity was not of the intense sort that it had been at times, when he was almost the idol of the people, it probably was of a more substantial character. It is probable, too, that at no time in its history had Plymouth Church been more closely identified with him, or the opinion been so prevalent that neither could prosper without the other. The services were as fully attended as ever, and church work had settled into the harmonious routine which always bodes good for a church's life.

All this was suddenly broken up. On Wednesday evening, March 2, Mr. Beecher suffered an apoplectic stroke and on the following Tuesday

he died. No one who attended the services, held almost continuously during that week, can ever forget them. The dominant tone was one of the personal loss of a friend. There was grateful recognition of a magnificent service done for humanity, and for the building up of the Kingdom of God, but the greater work was almost lost sight of in the individual remembrances, the personal testimonies to the man who had helped men. On Sunday of that week came the regular communion service of the church. The usual sermon was omitted and only the Lord's Supper was commemorated. There were several evening meetings, mostly for prayer and mutual sympathy.

The manifestation of public sym-

pathy surprised even those who knew best how widespread was the interest in the beloved pastor. As the coffin lay in the church on Thursday there was an unceasing line of those who wished to show their regard for him. On Friday the funeral services were conducted by Rev. Charles H. Hall, D. D., pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, to which Plymouth Church had succeeded in ownership of its site. As it was manifest that Plymouth Church could not possibly hold the crowds that wanted to come, simultaneous memorial services were held in other churches. Most of the business houses were closed, as were also the public offices of the city and the schools. Everywhere there was manifest the recognition that a great man had gone.



LYMAN ABBOTT

Who would take his place? Could anyone take his place? Was it not true that the relations between him and his church were so intimate, so vital, that the sundering of them by his death would inevitably involve the dissolution of the church? These were the questions asked everywhere by the public and probably in the consciousness of the members of the church itself, at least of a considerable number. Fortunately there was one already identified with the church for many years, who had come to it as a boy, had been very intimately associated with Mr. Beecher, and had entered most fully into his spirit and life. Dr. Lyman Abbott had already won for himself an independent position in the church and the literary life of the country. Glad to call himself

a disciple of Mr. Beecher, he had been by no means a copyist, and held his own place. Far more than would have been possible for anyone not so intimately acquainted with the life of the church, he was able to fill the gap at least for the time being, and it seemed the natural thing when he was called to fill the pulpit and guide the church activities until it could decide on some permanent arrangement.

Probably there has never been seen a finer instance of loyalty to a church's best traditions than the experience of the following months. As was inevitable, the audiences fell off very materially. Still the church was fairly well filled and for the first time in years the ushers had a reasonably comfortable time. Yet examina-

tion proved that the loss was only of the strangers. Not a pewholder withdrew. There was no diminution in the active work of the church. Prayer meetings, Sabbath School, mission services continued as before. Even the finances did not suffer. It was naturally impracticable to keep up the high premiums on pews. Hitherto the Tuesday evening succeeding the first Sunday in the year had been a sort of gala time, when loyalty to Plymouth and its pastor and good-natured rivalry had combined to bring from the more wealthy members sums mounting into the thousands of dollars. The current year was safe, but anticipating the change that would be necessary, the leaders, indeed practically the whole church, renewed their pew leases at

the same figure, so that there might be no question of financial disquiet for the new pastor, whoever he might be. Subsequently the whole method was changed, pew premiums giving place to the envelope system, under which the church has prospered greatly.

The immediate question of the conduct of the church being solved, the more important one of a permanent successor to Mr. Beecher was taken up in earnest. I do not think that the possibility of disbanding was for a moment present in the thought of any, certainly not of the leaders. They set about the work carefully with a clear realisation of the difficulties involved, but with a determination to succeed. It is always difficult to succeed a man of great in-

dividuality, and this general rule was made even more difficult in this case by the peculiar quality of the personality. The very intensity of the experiences of the past decade and more had served to create a certain alignment, and search as they would and did, it was difficult to find anyone to meet all the conditions.

It was not unnatural that the committee in charge, not, it must be remembered, of choosing a pastor, but of recommending one, or more, for the choice of both church and society, should look beyond the sea. More than one church had done so and with conspicuous success. Broadway Tabernacle had called Wm. M. Taylor, and Fifth Avenue Presbyterian, John Hall. Plymouth Church, at that time at least, was not likely to

look to Scotland, nor to Ireland. There was absolutely nothing of the Presbyterian in its make-up. It was Independent, through and through. To the Congregationalists of England therefore it must look, if it were to go beyond its own immediate fellowship.

It seemed as if just the man was found in Rev. Charles A. Berry of Wolverhampton. A friend of Mr. Beecher, an earnest and very effective preacher, a man of great evangelistic power, he won the hearts of Plymouth people, and the recommendation of the committee was followed by a unanimous and most urgent call to him to become the pastor. How deeply he appreciated, not so much the honour, though such he esteemed it, as the token of affec-

tionate confidence, was manifest both in his correspondence with the church and in the delay in announcing his answer. That he would have been glad to come is certain, equally so that he felt that duty to a work of peculiar quality and special need called him to stay with his own people. They were as dismayed at the possibility of losing him as Plymouth Church would have been had Mr. Beecher been called to another pulpit.

Mr. Berry's declination of the call brought Plymouth Church face to to face with a most difficult situation, at least it seemed so to many. In truth it was not so difficult as it seemed. Dr. Abbott had filled the pulpit with acceptance and had conducted the affairs of the church

with rare tact. The pastoral work, which had for some years been practically in the hands of Rev. S. B. Halliday, went on as usual. Now that Mr. Berry was not to come, who could so well meet the need as the one who had stood them in good stead in the time of stress? It was therefore perfectly natural that thoughts should turn to Dr. Abbott, and when they had once started equally natural that he should be called. Accordingly, in the spring of 1888 he was invited to be pastor. He accepted, and after a summer's rest in Europe commenced the active work of the pastorate in September.

During the summer months the preaching services were omitted, but the prayer meetings and mission work were continued. The general

condition of the church may be indicated by the impression made upon one who came in during the closing part of the interregnum to take up the pastoral work for a few months, dropped by Mr. Halliday, who had gone to build up a Beecher Memorial Church in the outskirts of Brooklyn. Coming fresh from foreign missionary service, with no experience in American church life, Rev. Edwin M. Bliss bears most earnest testimony to the vigour and power of the church life of Plymouth, even during those months when many were away. Repeatedly he told inquirers that those who imagined that Plymouth Church would go to pieces were absolutely mistaken; that there was evident a strong church on a firm foundation.

Truly there could be no better testimony to the substantial quality of Mr. Beecher's leadership than the experience of that year and a half of church life under such radically different conditions.

CHURCH THOUGHT AND LIFE

A LAYMAN is ordinarily not supposed to trouble himself very much about theology, but to leave that as the special prerogative of the ministers. This was certainly true of the great majority of the lay members of Plymouth Church. At the same time they were by no means indifferent to theology. They could not be so long as Mr. Beecher was pastor, and Dr. Abbott's positive opinions on theological questions, while not obtruded, were never hidden. It must be remembered, too, that the constitution, articles of faith

and covenant were drawn up by laymen. Henry C. Bowen was undoubtedly the moving spirit, but the others heartily concurred. The articles of faith were as follows:

"1. We believe in the existence of One Ever-living and True God, Sovereign and Unchangeable, Infinite in Power, Wisdom and Goodness.

"2. We believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be inspired of God; to contain a revelation of His will, and to be the authoritative rule of faith and practice.

"3. We believe that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are revealed in the Scriptures as existing, in respect to attributes, character and office, as three Persons, equally Divine; while in other respects they are

united, and are, in a proper sense, One God.

"4. We believe that our First Parents were created upright; that they fell from their original state by disobedience, and that all their posterity are not only prone to sin, but do become sinful and guilty before God.

"5. We believe that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to die for it; that Christ appeared in the flesh; that He set forth a perfect example of obedience; that He purely taught the truths needful for our salvation; that He suffered in our stead, the just for the unjust; that He died to atone for our sins, and to purify us therefrom; and that He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, where He ever liveth to make intercession for us.

"6. We believe that God offers full forgiveness and everlasting life to all who will heartily repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; while those who do not believe, but persevere in sin, shall finally perish.

"7. We believe in the resurrection of all the dead; in a final and general judgment, upon the awards of which the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment and the righteous into life eternal."

These were adopted by the church as they stand on April 17, 1848, by a rising vote. They represent the platform on which Mr. Beecher accepted the pastorate of the church, and have remained essentially the doctrinal basis of the church under the pastorates of Dr. Abbott and Dr. Hillis.

It will readily be seen that in general the position of Plymouth Church was essentially that of the New England churches, and when, after being trained in orthodox Windsor, Conn., I came to Brooklyn, I found myself in much the same atmosphere. At the same time there was nothing hidebound. There was no attempt to draw lines too tight; indeed, there was little drawing of lines. Principles were stated, and applied. Description took the place of definition.

One result was the intensifying of certain convictions, and of these the chief was that the test of belief was the life. Mr. Beecher's breadth of sympathy on all public questions, manifested particularly in the slavery discussion, came out if possible

more clearly in regard to doctrinal matters. He made it a principle to seek for the best in every man, and was very loath to believe evil of anyone. So when men differed from him in theology his tendency always was to seek for the truth that was contained in that view, and give it all possible emphasis. In his preaching he did not feel obliged to guard himself against every possible misconception, and would speak on a topic or present a truth, as if for the moment at least, that was the one topic, the one truth, to be considered. The result was that he was claimed by very nearly every denomination in the country. When this was done by Universalists or Unitarians, the old-line Congregationalists were troubled, and Presbyteri-

ans thanked God that they could not be held responsible for his views.

When Dr. Abbott became pastor the same condition continued, perhaps emphasised, as Dr. Abbott is broader in his theology than Mr. Beecher ever was, while still preserving Mr. Beecher's general attitude toward divergent beliefs. Under Dr. Hillis theological matters are subordinated to general aggressive church work, although now as always there is the most cordial welcome to all of every form of Christian statement who emphasise Christian life.

The effect of all this upon the church itself, in its membership, has been to make it exceedingly liberal. Men are taken for what they are, not for what they believe, and this principle accepted in one respect is easily

extended to others. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that broadness of theology is the same thing as looseness of doctrinal belief.

Plymouth Church is loyal to the faith in which it was born and nurtured, and there are not a few who do not accept many of the forms of statement current to-day. They do not therefore condemn those who do, realising that the very principle of intellectual independence, which has always been so powerful an element in the church life, inevitably involves difference of opinion. Many who might not accept all Dr. Abbott's views have received great benefit from his preaching, emphasising, as he always has, life rather than doctrine.

In its ecclesiastical organisation and relations Plymouth Church was thoroughly independent, scarcely even Congregational. Rule 1 of its ecclesiastical principles says: "This church is an independent ecclesiastical body; and in matters of doctrine, order and discipline is amenable to no other organisation." It did not propose to stand absolutely alone, however, as is shown from Rule 2: "This church will extend to other evangelical churches, and receive from them, that fellowship, advice and assistance which the laws of Christ require." In its general customs, as to membership, ordinances, meetings, etc., it conformed to those of the Congregational churches, with which those who were its first members had been connected, and when it

installed its first pastor, as in each succeeding instance, it called in the Congregational churches to assist. So also in its time of greatest stress it recognised the obligations of its fellowship with the Congregational churches by calling the largest Congregational council ever convened in America. At the same time, if it seemed to it right and wise to emphasise the broader fellowship with those of other faith it did so, whether Congregationalists at large liked it or not. So in its benevolences, it gave where it chose. If it liked to give through the medium of what were known as the Congregational Societies, it did; if it didn't like to, it didn't. Every once in a while from some source, near or more remote, generally more remote, protest would

come that Mr. Beecher and his church were not carrying their full share of denominational burdens; there was courteous attention, but a very definite giving to understand that the church would do as it thought best.

The independence of the organisation manifested itself in individuals. Those who wished their gifts to go through a certain channel were perfectly at liberty to send them there, and no one felt aggrieved because others did not see their way clear to do the same.

Another effect, both of the ecclesiastical independence and the broad humanitarian theology, was manifest in the social life, to which reference has been made many times, not too often however, for it was and is

one of the chief features of Plymouth life.

In the northeast corner of what is now the Sunday School room were located the social parlours. They were handsomely furnished, and there every Monday evening Mr. Beecher held an informal reception, when all members of the church or congregation were cordially welcomed. The prominent members of the church were present, including such men as Messrs. Howard, Bowen, Claflin, Sage, Storrs, Freeland, Wheelock, Fanning, Mason, Caldwell, Ropes, Southwick, Murray, Leckler, Sloat, Corning, Hutchinson, Burgess, Dr. Morrill Studwell and others, and this was often an opportunity to welcome distinguished visitors. One such occasion I remember well, when a large

number of distinguished people gathered to welcome Mr. Beecher's sister, Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe. She had just returned from England, where she had been introduced to Queen Victoria as the first American authoress; the papers had announced that two million copies of her book, "Uncle Tom's Cabin," had been sold, and the congratulations and social enjoyment were great.

The same characteristics that distinguished the regular church life were manifest in all its departments, as the Sunday School and Bible classes. In all there was free play for individual ideas and development. One Bible class in particular I would mention, that conducted for many years by Mr. Wilbur, and which had more than one hundred members. In

a variety of ways, by freedom of discussion in the class, by excursions, receptions, entertainments of various kinds, it bound the young people together, helped greatly to build up the church, and particularly contributed to its social life. How firmly it was established is witnessed by the fact that it has never weakened, even in the changes that have come in the membership, or the official direction of the church. With three pastors so different in many respects as Mr. Beecher, Dr. Abbott and Dr. Hillis, there has been no difference in the general type of church life.

THE CHURCH STAFF

IT is only of recent years that the Congregational and Presbyterian churches have come to include in the regular staff of church officers, assistant pastors or pastor's assistants. For a long time Mr. Beecher and Plymouth Church followed the prevailing custom, relying upon volunteer service for such extra work in the line of parish visitation as was beyond the pastor's power. As the church grew, however, and as the demands upon its pastor for outside work in the form of public addresses, lectures, etc., increased, it became evident that something must

be done to meet the emergency. Fortunately, just the right man was found. Rev. S. B. Halliday had seen considerable service in mission work in New York City, was a man of genial character, great sympathy, kindhearted, and painstaking in the performance of his duties. He came to Brooklyn in 1870 and remained there in pastoral duty until after Mr. Beecher's death. His work was chiefly among the poorer class, but there were many families of means that welcomed him to their homes. Perhaps the one word that best expresses the impression that he left on those who knew him best, is—godly. He was a good man, one who in life and thought lived near God. Mr. Beecher thoroughly appreciated him, and he idolised Mr. Beecher. It was

scarcely surprising that when Mr. Beecher died he should find it hard to adapt himself to changed conditions. He had hoped that Mr. Berry would accept the call to the pastorate, but when that failed, he resigned his position and went into East New York, then on the outskirts of Brooklyn, where he took charge of a weak Congregational Church. It was due to him that the name "The Beecher Memorial Church" was given to it, and it was significant of the honour in which both Mr. Beecher and Mr. Halliday were held that men of every form of faith, Christian and non-Christian, and from many different countries, contributed toward the building which was erected a few years later. When Mr. Halliday died it was like the severing of an-

other link of the chain binding Mr. Beecher to the Christian life of Brooklyn.

When Dr. Abbott became pastor the question of an assistant came up again. At first Dr. Abbott was unwilling to have one, but as the necessity became more apparent, and also as there appeared one who seemed in every way fitted for the work, Rev. Howard S. Bliss was called and commenced his duties soon after Dr. Abbott was installed. The son of the well-known founder of the Syrian Protestant College at Beirut, Syria, a man of pleasing ways, tact in dealing with people, and a fine speaker, he won the most cordial regard and affections of the church people. He remained for many years, through Dr. Abbott's pastorate, leaving Ply-

Newell Dwight Hillis

mouth only to take the pastorate of a flourishing church in New Jersey, whose traditions made it easy for one naturally sympathetic with and trained in the liberal yet practical and aggressive atmosphere of Plymouth Church, to develop a vigorous church life. Mr. Bliss has since been called to the presidency of the college at Beirut to take up the work as it was laid down by his aged father.

During Dr. Hillis' pastorate there have been two assistant pastors, Revs. Willard P. Harmon and George J. Corey. Both have well sustained the traditions of the church, have made themselves many friends, and have done much to develop the newer life which under changed conditions has become a necessity. Mr. Harmon

left to enter the full pastorate. Mr. Corey is the present assistant.

Comparatively few who are not themselves directly connected with the business affairs of a church probably realise how much of the orderly conduct of the church depends upon the sexton. To many people he is simply the man who looks after funerals, sees that the furnace fires are properly managed, the church swept, etc. In Plymouth Church the sexton was always a man of considerable importance, and I feel it a duty which I owe to the church, not less than to them, to speak of their faithful work. Not only have they conducted the ordinary duties of a sexton, but have acted in a clerical capacity to the board of trustees in collecting pew rents, and in other business of the

church. In this they have had a most important share in the comfort of the congregation and the success of the church.

Plymouth Church has been in charge of five different sextons during its existence. Mr. McFarlane was its caretaker in its early years. Owing to his bluff manner he was never very popular with the young people, and one instance I shall never forget. One evening Charles Dickens was to lecture in the church. As the price of the tickets was from one to two dollars, there were not many of the boys at that time who could afford to pay it. We were bound not to be left out, so a plan was devised to overcome the difficulty. Accordingly we perched ourselves on a window-sill outside, where by rais-

ing the sash slightly we could hear and see the lecturer. All went well for a time and we were congratulating ourselves, when the old sexton discovered us. Then there was a scampering up Orange and down Henry to Fulton Street with McFarlane close after. I was one of the unfortunate boys who were caught, and the pounding which I received made such an impression upon me that I can see and hear Charles Dickens to this day.

After Mr. McFarlane came Mr. Weld, who was the sexton for many years, during the most exciting period of the church's history, and when it was thronged by the greatest crowds. Mr. Weld was faithful to his trust, never ruffled, kind to everyone and popular with all, and remained at

his post until old age and sickness called him away. His funeral was large, attended by a great number of the members of the church. When his body was carried down the aisle Mr. and Mrs. Beecher, arm in arm, headed the mournful procession. If some great artist could have transferred the scene to canvas and called it the funeral of the old sexton, it could have taken its place among the other great paintings of church history.

Mr. George Day, one of the oldest members of the church and who is still living, followed Mr. Weld, but remained in office only two years, being succeeded by Mr. Smith, who filled the position for a long time in a most acceptable manner. After him came Mr. Charles T. Halsey, who has

charge at the present time. I wish especially to mention my obligations to him for assistance in verifying names and dates.

In close relation to the pastors and assistant pastors have been the clerks of the church. Perhaps the one who attained the widest fame in this capacity was Mr. Thomas G. Shearman, whose term of service was long and included the period of the trials. At the ecclesiastical council he made his knowledge of Congregational polity and history very manifest, and contributed not a little to the convincing of the churches of the denomination that Plymouth Church, while standing firm in its independency, was yet willing and glad to recognise to the full the fellowship of other churches, and desirous of doing all

that it might to make that fellowship cordial. The present clerk, Horatio C. King, is but another illustration of how men of ability and position have delighted to serve Plymouth.

The Sunday School has always been a most important part of Plymouth Church, and the list of superintendents shows how it has been regarded by all. At the first organisation Mr. Bowen was made superintendent, on September 5, 1847, with an attendance of ten teachers and twenty-eight scholars. The following May there were twenty-five teachers and one hundred and forty scholars, and twenty years later, in 1867, the attendance was considerably over one thousand. Mr. Bowen was followed by Luther Eames, Edward Corning, Henry E. Morrill, George

E. Bell, Rossiter W. Raymond, and George W. Bardwell, who is now in charge.

My own recollections centre particularly about Dr. Morrill, during whose service of ten years, from 1851 to 1861, I became a member of the school. All have done noble service. Professor Raymond has perhaps been specially successful. His clear thought, simple expression, hearty sympathy, great personal tact, have endeared him to all, teachers and scholars, and done much to build up the school and church.

To speak of the deacons and trustees would be simply to repeat the names of those already mentioned as prominent in the work of the church, for on one or the other of these boards very nearly all have served at

some time. It has been, too, no mere formal service. Men of high position in business and professional life have given freely of time and labour to serve the interests of the church.

Mention should be made of the Bethel and Mayflower Missions. The Bethel Mission School was established in 1841, in Main Street, near the Catherine Ferry, then to rooms above the market on James Street, then to 42 and 44 Fulton Street. Almost as soon as Plymouth Church was formed its members interested themselves in the school, but there was no official relation until 1866, when it was voted to adopt the school as one of the regular institutions of the church. This was accepted by the school, and the connection continued until 1904, when it was dropped.

THE FORT SUMTER EXPEDITION

WHEN it became evident that the North had won the victory and that the defeat of the Confederacy was at hand, President Lincoln decided to celebrate the event by replacing the same old flag that had waved over Fort Sumter before the war had commenced, and had been lowered on the 14th of April, 1861, after a brave struggle by Major Anderson, only when compelled to do so by the guns of General Beauregard. By the President's order, the Secretary of War directed that on "April 14th, 1865, at twelve o'clock noon,

Major General Anderson will raise and plant upon the ruins of Fort Sumter, in Charleston harbour, the same United States flag which floated over the battlements of that fort during the Rebel assault four years previous." At the request of Mr. Lincoln, Mr. Beecher was invited to deliver the oration upon that occasion. As soon as it became known that he had accepted, a large number of his friends wished to go with him, but how to get there was the problem. The *Arago,* the government steamer, was full, and all the other steamers available had been chartered by the government for service in the war. After a diligent search it was found that the Neptune Steamship Company would take one of their propellers, running between New York

and Providence, off the route, and charter it for a party.

A committee was formed consisting of Mr. Edward Cary, editor of the *Brooklyn Union,* Mr. Edwin A. Studwell and myself as chairman. The steamship company agreed to carry one hundred and eighty passengers for the sum of eighteen thousand dollars, which I paid them, the trip to be made in nine days.

As soon as all the arrangements were completed, Mr. Beecher announced the program from the pulpit and through the press. Nearly all the prominent clergymen and citizens of Brooklyn applied for tickets. It became necessary to refuse a large number, as the steamer could not accommodate more than one hundred and eighty people. On the 10th of

April, 1865, we left the foot of Wall Street in one of the Fulton Ferry boats, which had been kindly offered to take the party to the *Oceanus,* lying at the foot of Robinson Street, New York. A more patriotic party never left the city of Brooklyn. All the way to Charleston, those who were not seasick (for the steamer rolled fearfully) were engaged in holding meetings and singing patriotic songs. Speeches were made by the clergymen, including Messrs. Cuyler, Putman, Gallagher, Chadwick, Corning, French and others; also by prominent citizens of Brooklyn, including Messrs. Low, Bowen, Smith, Lambert, Frothingham and others. The singing was led by Mr. Bradbury, while among the songs were "We are out on the ocean sail-

ing," "John Brown's Soul is Marching on," "We'll Hang Jeff Davis to a Sour Apple Tree." Arriving at Charleston Bar on the afternoon of the 13th of April we passed into the harbour, and as we went by Fort Sumter the entire company assembled upon the upper deck and sang "Old Hundred."

Just before the *Oceanus* left the dock in New York we received a despatch from the Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, that Lee with his entire army had surrendered to Grant. Our steamer was the first one to carry the news of Lee's surrender to the people of the South. As the *Oceanus* slowly neared the dock at Charleston, we could see the shores were lined with people, and as we came within hailing distance, Cap-

tain Young shouted through his trumpet, "Lee has surrendered!" At once there went up a mighty shout from that black mass—it was like the roar of Niagara. "God bless Massa Lincoln!" could be heard above the din, then came "My country, 'tis of thee," "Hail Columbia," sung as only coloured people can sing. The band on the *Blackstone,* which was anchored near, played "The Star-Spangled Banner," and in the evening all the men-of-war in the harbour were illuminated to celebrate the news of the victory.

The next morning all was bustle and activity, getting ready to go down to the fort, and every available sailing craft was brought into service to carry the people of Charleston to the ceremonies of the day. At eleven

o'clock we were assembled inside the walls of Sumter, as distinguished a gathering as ever assembled since the signing of The Declaration of Independence. High officers of the Army and Navy, United States Senators, members of Congress, officers of the Government, clergymen and distinguished citizens from all over the United States, and a number from England.

At the hour of noon Major Anderson, who had been a long time in feeble health, came upon the platform. Sergeant Hart took from a mail-pouch the old flag and fastened it to the halyards. Major Anderson, taking hold of the rope, said, "I thank God that I have lived to see this day and perform probably the last act of duty of my life for my

country." (He died soon after.) As he slowly raised the flag over the ruined walls of the fort, from Forts Moultrie, Ripley, Pickney, Putnam and Johnson, Cummings Point and Battery B, and from every United States gunboat in the harbour there broke forth a mighty salute. The thunder of the cannon fairly shook the earth and the clouds of smoke enveloped the fort in almost midnight darkness. When they rolled away Old Glory waved peacefully as though it had never been fired upon by rebel cannon. The audience sang "Victory at last."

Mr. Beecher came forward to the front of the platform to deliver the oration. There was a cold wind blowing in from the sea, the wind playing havoc with the leaves of his

manuscript. As he commenced he took off his hat, but immediately arose the cry, "Put on your hat, Mr. Beecher." He obeyed and went on with his address, holding the close attention of everyone for over an hour. It has taken its place in the history of memorable addresses delivered on great occasions. The history of the country will place it second to none among the most patriotic and able orations.

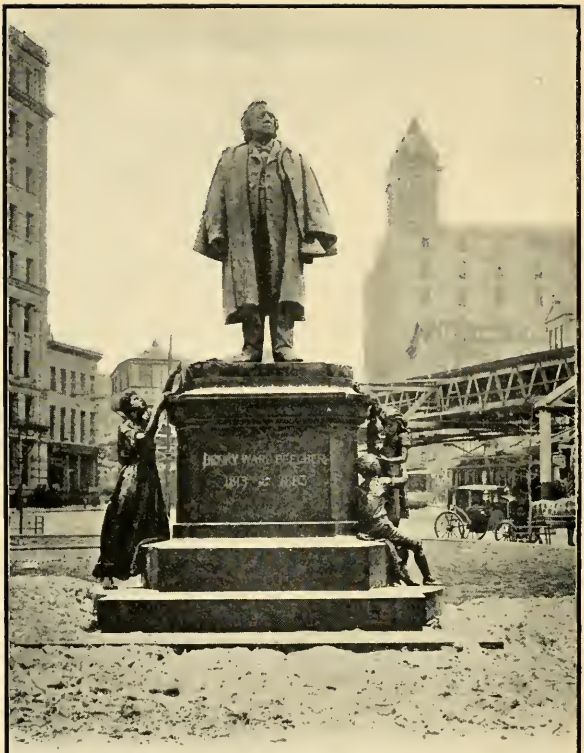
The next two or three days were spent in and about Charleston, visiting the scenes of desolation caused by the war. The only carriages to be had were donkey carts. It was a usual sight to see George Thompson of England and Charles Sumner jogging along, or William Lloyd Garrison and Senator Wilson to-

gether, Henry Ward Beecher and Fred Douglass in a donkey cart driven by a former slave. Mass meetings were held in the abandoned churches and public buildings of the city, mostly attended by the coloured people.

On the third day the *Oceanus* passed out of Charleston harbour, saluted by all the ships and forts. The flag on Sumter was dipped as we passed by; all went well until we rounded Cape Hatteras and were bearing into Fortress Monroe. Passing a pilot boat, the captain shouted, "What's the news?" The reply came back over the water, "The President is dead." We could not and did not believe it. Soon after, passing another pilot boat, to a similar question the answer came, "Mr. Lincoln has

been assassinated." Then we realised the truth. With saddened hearts we sailed up to Fortress Monroe, which was already draped in black. Here our party separated, some coming direct to New York, the rest going to Washington to take part in the ceremonies attending the funeral of Mr. Lincoln.

I have spoken more fully of the Sumter excursion because it was an important national event, and because it was so closely identified with Plymouth Church and Brooklyn. If it had not been for Mr. Beecher there would have been no *Oceanus* voyage.



Henry Ward Beecher's Statue, Brooklyn, N. Y.

QUAKER CITY EXCURSION

THE plan of the *Quaker City* Excursion, made famous by Mark Twain, originated in Plymouth Church, when Mr. Beecher contemplated writing a Life of Christ. He expressed a desire to visit the sacred places of Palestine, where our Lord lived and where He was crucified, and wanted several members of Plymouth Church to go with him. A committee was formed to arrange for the journey, composed of Captain C. Duncan, John T. Howard and Rufus R. Graves. A very beautiful and substantial side-wheel steamship, the *Quaker City,* was chartered for the

journey, and the number of passengers was limited to one hundred and fifty. The price of the passage for each person was fixed at twelve hundred and fifty dollars. Mr. Beecher engaged passage, but at the last moment decided not to go.

The Secretary of State furnished us with letters commending us to the attention of the foreign governments which we might visit, and on the eighth day of June we sailed out of New York harbour. Our first stopping place was at the Azores, then we went to Gibraltar and Marseilles, where time was given to the passengers to visit Paris and London; next to Genoa, from which port we made visits to Milan, Venice and Lake Como. The next stopping place was Leghorn, where we turned aside to

Florence and Pisa and visited Garibaldi, who was then at his home. From Leghorn our course took us to Naples, giving time to see Rome, Vesuvius and Pompeii; then on through the Straits of Messina, across the Ionian Sea, through the Grecian Archipelago to Athens, Greece; through the Dardanelles and the Sea of Marmora to Constantinople. After one week's stay in that Oriental city, the route lay through the Bosphorus, across the Black Sea to Sebastopol. After visiting the famous battlefields of the Crimea, we sailed to Odessa, in the northwest corner of the Black Sea, ours being the first American steamship which ever entered that harbour. While staying there a telegram was received from the Emperor of Russia inviting us

to visit him at his palace, Livadia, at Yalta. Yalta is a very beautiful place on the slope of a mountain, overlooking the Black Sea, about two hundred miles east of Odessa, and is the summer home of the imperial family of Russia. The Grand Duke Michael's palace, Orianda, the Grand Duke Vladimir's, Worondow, and their grounds join those of the Emperor. The invitation was accepted. Mrs. Griswold's story of the visit as given in the "Pilgrimage" is as follows:

"On the way from Odessa to Yalta, several meetings were held by the gentlemen in the saloon for the purpose of preparing an address to be presented to the Czar; at the same time the ladies were gathered in

groups conversing about the coming event.

"This morning we dropped anchor at Yalta. The Governor-general conveyed to us a message from the Emperor 'that we were welcome, and he would be pleased to receive us the next day at twelve o'clock.' Word also came that carriages and horses would be in readiness to convey the party to the palace, which is about two miles from the landing place.

"All was astir on board preparing for the great occasion. The porters are overtaxed in getting out the stored-away trunks for the passengers, as the most *recherché* wardrobes must be selected. The ladies' purchases through Europe are now brought into requisition. Paris dresses, laces, coiffures, and jewelry

are to be worn for the first time. At ten and a half o'clock we saw the spacious rowboats belonging to the Emperor nearing our ship. How gaily they were decked out with scarlet cloth and fringe hanging over the sides almost touching the water; each boat was rowed by twelve men dressed in white caps and uniform. They approached the vessel's side with extreme caution, owing to the heavy sea, which was rolling in. As the boat would rise upon a wave and sink away, one person stepped in after another until it was filled, when another boat would take its place. In this way all were safely landed. We left the boat by crimson-carpeted steps leading up from the water into a picturesque canopied landing. The ladies occupied the carriages and the

gentlemen rode on horseback. We formed quite a procession, numbering over sixty persons.

"The gates were thrown open to admit us to the palace grounds. A company of mounted Cossacks were drawn up on each side of the gate, and we passed through in military order, escorted by the Grand Duke Michael, brother of the Emperor, who had met us on the way.

"At precisely twelve o'clock we formed in front of the palace. The smoothly cut lawn around us was like a velvet carpet, with a profusion of surrounding flowers. Immediately the Emperor and the Empress appeared, accompanied by their daughter Marie, and one of their sons, the Grand Duke Serge, followed by a retinue of distinguished persons.

"The American Consul who had come with us from Odessa stepped forward and read a short address to his Imperial Highness Alexander II, Czar of Russia, which had been prepared and signed by the passengers. The Emperor replied to it by saying 'that he thanked us for the address and was very much pleased to meet us, especially as such friendly relations exist between Russia and the United States.' The Empress further replied by saying 'that Americans were favourites in Russia,' and she hoped her people were the same with the Americans.

"The Emperor is tall and well-proportioned, with a mild yet firm expression. The impression of the beholders is that he is one born to command. He wore a white cap and

a white linen suit, the coat confined with a belt around the waist and ornamented with gilt buttons and elaborate epaulets.

"The Empress is of medium height, fair complexion, and although delicate looking she appears young for one of her age. A bright, welcoming smile lit up her face. Her dress was white foulard silk, dotted with blue and richly trimmed with blue satin. She wore a small sleeveless jacket, a broad blue sash, and around her neck was a tie made of swiss muslin and valenciennes lace. On her head was a straw hat trimmed with blue velvet and black lace. Her hands were covered with flesh-covered kid gloves, and she carried a light drab parasol lined with blue silk.

"The Grand Duchess was attired in a dress of similar material to that of her mother, only this was more tastefully arranged with blue silk and fringe, a belt of the same material as the dress, fastened by a large rosette, and a straw hat also trimmed with blue silk.

"The Grand Duke Serge is quite young, and a well-appearing youth. He was dressed in a scarlet blouse and white pants.

"Individual introductions followed. Several of the ladies, including myself, had an opportunity of conversing with the Empress. All of the Imperial family speak English very well.

"We were escorted through the buildings by the Emperor and Empress, entering a door which was on

either side a bower of flowers. Almost all the apartments were thrown open. The floors were inlaid and polished, and the furniture was curious and costly. The Emperor took special pains to show us the chapel, where he and his family worshipped. It was very handsome, and connected with the main building.

"Every effort was made by the Imperial family to welcome us, and really the Pilgrims seemed to act as much at home as though they were accustomed to calling on Emperors every day.

"I could not realise that we were being entertained by a ruler of more than eighty million people, and whose word was the supreme law of the most powerful nation on the globe.

"At eight o'clock in the evening the anchor was lifted and we sailed by the Czar's palace, which was brilliantly lighted, and amid the booming of cannon, and the shooting of rockets, and a blue light illuminating our ship we bade farewell to a scene which I shall treasure as one of the brightest remembrances of my life."

From Yalta the steamer sailed across the Black Sea, through the Bosphorus, down the coast of Asia Minor, to the Gulf of Smyrna, anchoring in the harbour of Smyrna. A delay was made to give time to visit the ruins of the ancient city of Ephesus. Passing the coast of the Isle of Cyprus the next landing place was Beirut, where several days were

spent, affording the pilgrims opportunity to visit the Mountains of Lebanon, the ruins of Baalbec, and the city of Damascus. From Beirut we sailed down the coast of Palestine, passing Tyre and Sidon. The steamer anchored off the harbour of Jaffa. Three weeks were given to visit Jerusalem, Bethany, the River Jordan, the Dead Sea, Jericho, and other places in the Holy Land. At Jerusalem one of the Plymouth Church passengers, Mr. Moses Beach, purchased an olive tree at the foot of the Mount of Olives near the Garden of Gethsemane, had it cut down and transported to Jaffa, where it was placed on board the *Quaker City,* brought home, and through the generosity of Mr. Beach was made into furniture which now stands in

Plymouth pulpit. The next landing place was Alexandria, Egypt, giving an opportunity to visit Cairo and the Pyramids. From Alexandria the voyage was continued homeward, stopping at Malta, Gibraltar and Bermuda.

It was a great journey, as it afforded a majestic and sublime panorama of the different nations, kindreds, and tongues of the world, and may well take its place among other great events of Plymouth Church.

PERSONALIA

A GREAT deal of the power of church life, as well as of personal life, centres about personal items. Without seeking to arrange them chronologically or even to associate them topically, I wish to gather up in this chapter some of the incidents that do not well belong in the preceding chapters. Some of them it is easy to locate, others have lost their setting, as the years have gone by, and stand out with an individuality that is their own. It is no reflection on Mr. Beecher's successors, noble and true men, that he figures so prominently in them. The memory

of those early days when, as a country lad, I came to Brooklyn, naturally centres around the man who from my boyhood, through early manhood and into middle age had a mighty influence upon my life.

One event I recall, in the very first year of my new life. In itself it was no more significant or important than many others, but it meant much to me, opening up as it did a broader vision of world-wide interest, and particularly of the close connection between things called secular and religious. The slavery question had a profound religious bearing, and touched the very core of Plymouth Church life, yet even that does not stand out more vividly in my memory than the scene when Louis Kossuth landed at the Battery from an Amer-

ican man-of-war, and rode up Broadway escorted by a hundred or more prominent citizens. We boys knew little about him, but none the less eagerly we hurried along, barely escaping the horses' feet, and none the less lustily we joined in the shout. Later, through Mr. Beecher's references to him and his work, and by seeing him in Plymouth Church, we came to know that the fight for liberty was the same, whether in the South or in Europe, and whether it was for black men that we knew or for Hungarians of whom we knew nothing, scarcely even the name. Another lesson that we learned was that the whole world is kin, and that even far-off lands cannot suffer oppression and wrong without other lands suffering with them. So Ply-

mouth pulpit became a platform for the presentation of every form of appeal to the best Christian consciousness of the church and through the church of the nation.

Another scene, after I had grown to manhood, illustrates the same chivalry that was bound to assert the claims of any person or any class. Mr. Beecher was always an advocate of women's rights. He could never see why women should be debarred from so many of the privileges, or duties, of social life. During the first Lincoln campaign there appeared upon the lecture platform a woman who brought a woman's plea for the cause of liberty and human rights. No one who ever heard Anna Dickinson speak could forget her, or failed to be moved by her eloquence.

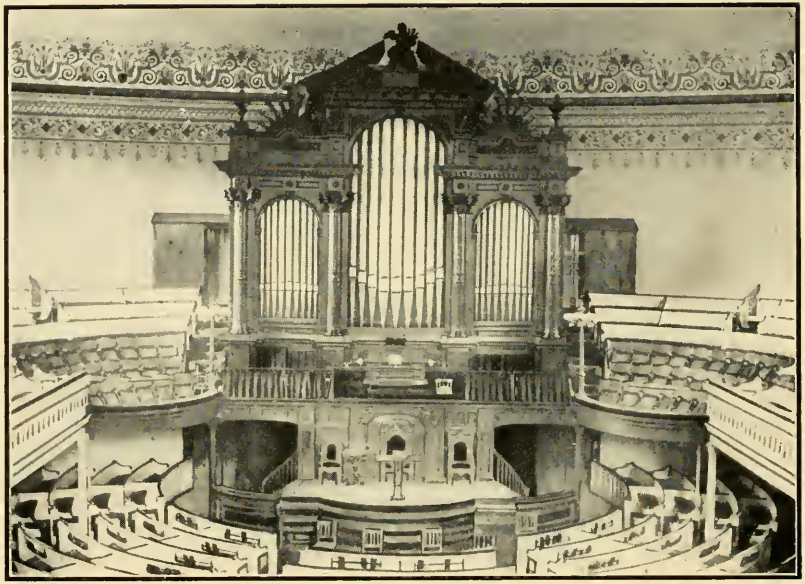
Of course Mr. Beecher was her friend, and welcomed her assistance in the contest that was growing more and more severe. She drew great crowds whenever she spoke.

I was then president of the Central Republican Club, and we engaged Miss Dickinson to speak in the Academy of Music, where we were then holding meetings. Some days before the meeting was to take place the secretary of the board of directors of the Academy called at my office with a notice that the directors could not allow Miss Dickinson to speak in that building.

I did not know what to do. The meeting had been extensively advertised. I finally decided to go and see Mr. Beecher. As I recited the facts to him I could see the expression of

indignation and the colour come to his face. He thought a moment and said, "Wait until next Sunday morning."

The next Sunday the church was packed. When Mr. Beecher gave the notices and came to Miss Dickinson's lecture, he called the board of directors to account for this action in refusing to allow a woman to speak in the Academy of Music. One of the directors, who was present, being ignorant of the situation, took it up and denied the action of the directors. Then said Mr. Beecher, "I take back all that I have said." I was there in the west gallery, and at once decided not to allow a misrepresentation like that to pass, and, mounted on the backs of two pews, I recited to the audience all of the facts and the of-



Interior of Plymouth Church

ficial notice which I had from the directors, that the Academy could not be used for this woman to speak in.

When I had finished, the congregation broke into great applause. Mr. Beecher then went on with his remarks, scoring the directors of the Academy, and created such a sentiment in the community that the directors rescinded their action, and the great mass meeting, with Miss Dickinson as speaker, took place.

Since then, not only the Academy of Music, but other public buildings throughout the country have been open for women to speak in, upon any subject.

Stories of Mr. Beecher's sayings might be gathered by the thousand, indeed they have been, and published in a book for the use of ministers,

teachers, and public speakers. Fortunately or unfortunately the reporter was not quite so ubiquitous then, especially in the earlier days, as now, but still there was a sufficient amount of newspaper enterprise, and I often wish I had kept a record of the incidents and trenchant remarks that were gathered up. A good many, however, never got into the papers. Whether or not the following did I cannot say. Certainly I did not get them from the press.

One day the evening papers announced that a terrible accident had happened to Mrs. Beecher, that she had been thrown out of her carriage in lower Fulton Street, been dashed against the steps of the Long Island Bank, and so seriously injured that she was not expected to live, and

some said that she had been killed. That evening at the prayer meeting no one expected to see Mr. Beecher. He came as usual and the people crowded around him asking about Mrs. Beecher, as she had been reported killed. He seemed quite disturbed by the persistent inquiries of those around him. In a half impatient manner he said, " It would have been serious with any other woman."

The same cool, imperturbable bearing so often manifest in his experiences in England came out again and again during the stirring scenes in this country. When the Civil War broke out and the riots in New York took place for several days the city was almost in the hands of the mob. It was given out that Plymouth Church was to be attacked the next

Sunday evening. Crowds of rough-looking men came over the ferry and mixed with the congregation. John Folk, superintendent of the police force of Brooklyn, with forty of his men was in the lecture room and back of the organ to protect Mr. Beecher, in case of an attempt to reach him, amid the intense excitement of the audience. Mr. Beecher came upon the platform calm and cool and proceeded with the services as usual. During the sermon a stone crashed through the upper windows from the outside. Mr. Beecher stopped, looked up to the windows, and then to the great congregation, and said "Miscreant," and calmly went on with his sermon.

He was always glad when he could be, so to speak, off duty, and be free

to do whatever occurred to him to do, whether anybody else would ever have thought of it or not. One Sunday evening when his pulpit was occupied by some other pastor he was seen sitting in the third gallery. When asked why he was up there, he replied "that he wanted to see how the preacher looked from that point of view."

The boys on the Heights all knew Mr. Beecher and liked to meet him because he always had a word with them. In coming to church one day he met a group of boys. They hailed him in this fashion: "There goes Mr. Beecher, he is a screecher." When he reached the church it seemed to please him to tell the story to the congregation.

Whenever Mr. Beecher crossed the

ocean he was very sea-sick, and after landing he would say that those whom God abhorred He sent to sea. This was probably the reason why at the last moment he decided not to to take the trip in the *Quaker City,* referred to in a previous chapter. The expedition would never have been organised but for Mr. Beecher, and yet it had to go without him.

While in a very real sense Mr. Beecher was a true cosmopolitan, and a genuine citizen of the United States, he was specially fond of New England, was grateful that that section was his birthplace, and always glad when one opportunity or another called him there to lecture or preach. The New England people fully reciprocated the feeling and in turn Mr. Beecher used to declare that

"New England was the brain of the nation." Little wonder that so many New England boys found their way to Plymouth Church.

In a similar way he was very fond of Brooklyn as the city of homes. He was interested in New York, with its bustle and rush, as the "work shop," but Brooklyn was the "boarding house," and many a semi-homeless boarder found a warm welcome in Plymouth Church. Perhaps it was these people that he had in mind when Plymouth Church could not hold half the people who desired to attend the services, and he appealed to the pewholders to stay away evenings and give their pews to strangers, inaugurating thus a custom which has continued to the present time.

While preaching upon the great-

ness of God's work as compared with the works of man, he said man can tunnel mountains, build ships to cross the sea, span the world with the telegraph, cross the continent with the iron horse, build cathedrals and capitols, machines to fly in the air, and explore the depths of the sea, but with all of man's greatness and skill, "he cannot make a fly."

In a vivid description of a thunder storm illustrating some part of his sermon he closed with a most beautiful piece of word painting in describing the passing away of the clouds after the storm, picturing the sun shining upon the edges of the clouds making a pathway as he said for "Angels to walk to and fro when they came down from Heaven."

Intensely practical as he was in his

conception of religion, Mr. Beecher had a very profound sense of the future life, and there was always a sub-stratum of that thought in his preaching. In a sermon on the Darwinian theory he said, "I do not care where I came from; it is where I am going to that I am interested in."

In a sermon on Heaven, he said that everyone had a right to make their own Heaven. The one that inspired in them the greatest hope and most beautiful thoughts and gave them the greatest happiness was their Heaven. Speaking of the end of life, he said that when he died he would like to pass out of life suddenly, like a cannon ball shot out of a cannon.

FUTURE PLYMOUTH

WHAT will become of Plymouth Church when Mr. Beecher passes away? was a question often asked in the early days. The answer to that has already been given. It was a severe test to which the church was put, but it stood it nobly. Again when Dr. Abbott was pastor the same question was asked. Ten years of successful life is the sufficient answer to that. Now again the question comes up under the pastoral care of Dr. Hillis.

My answer to this last question as to the others is, that the life of Plymouth Church does not depend upon

any one man, however great he may be. It would be difficult to find three men more different, each from the other, than the three who have filled Plymouth pulpit. Yet after all the general type of the church life has not changed, nor has its attitude toward the surrounding city and the wider national life taken on a different character. The emphasis now, as always, is on Christian living, in the assurance that out of that living will come Christian thinking. Each in his own way, but each with the same purpose and the same result, has preached the gospel of life. The form of that life has varied, but the variation has been occasioned by the need of adaptation to the general type of church life, as illustrated on every hand. Plymouth has simply

shown its ability to meet new conditions in itself.

So also with regard to the broader relation to public life. It is now, as it always has been, the natural and the expected thing that every great cause, for righteousness and peace, should send its advocates to Brooklyn and that they should have a welcome in Plymouth pulpit. A significant illustration of this occurred but recently at the opening of the great Peace Congress. The two churches that were identified with it more than any others were Plymouth and Broadway Tabernacle. Probably no pastor in the country is more widely known for his practical interest in public affairs than is Dr. Hillis, and wherever he goes from the Atlantic to the Pacific he is welcomed both for him-

self and as the pastor of Plymouth Church. The simple fact is it is the same old Plymouth. It has grown up with the country, has had its share in the making of the country, whether in the strife of war or in the urgency for peace, and has made for itself a name that will stand, like Faneuil Hall in Boston, or Independence Hall in Philadelphia, for all time to come.

This permanency, however, will be as its strength has been in the wise management of the church in its various departments. The problem of a city church located as Plymouth is must be to-day very different from that which faced its founders. Brooklyn has gone 'way beyond the Heights, and while strangers still find it easy to reach, the permanent

membership extends over a wide territory and must of necessity be more or less transitory. This uncertainty brings to view the necessity of permanence of financial basis. They are wise, strong men who are in charge, as is shown by the fact that notwithstanding the changes that are inevitable, the church is free from debt and is accumulating permanent funds which will be of great value. Running expenses of all kinds, pastors' salaries, music, etc., are met from current income from pew rents, leaving the church free to put additional sums into permanent form. Then there is a Beecher endowment fund of almost fifty thousand dollars, and a Beecher memorial fund of the same amount. Constantly sums of money are coming into the church treasury

Chair Used by Henry Ward Beecher
in Plymouth Church

from legacies or special gifts, and these are either invested or applied to improvements such as it is judged will increase the effectiveness of the church work. Among these is a Beecher memorial building soon to be erected adjoining the church. The alteration of the front entrance is contemplated, and other work which will prove advantageous to the society. Memorial stained glass windows are to be put in, contributed by members.

Perhaps still more important is the development of the church activities. In Mr. Beecher's time the great feature of church life was the sermon. To-day it is church organisation. Some seem to think that the preaching of to-day is inferior to that of a generation ago. While it may be

true that no single man stands out as did Mr. Beecher, Dr. R. S. Storrs, or Dr. William M. Taylor, it seems to me that the average of preaching is higher. Dr. Hillis is not Mr. Beecher, but he is Dr. Hillis, and Plymouth people never go from Plymouth Church without the thought of a good and great presentation of truth. However that may be, one thing is very noticeable: the growth in Plymouth, as elsewhere, of church societies. The women have their societies for Home and Foreign Missions, there is a Young Woman's Guild, and a Henry Ward Beecher Missionary Circle, a Young Men's Club, and an organisation of older men known as Plymouth Men. The year that Mr. Beecher died The Plymouth League was formed and had

a successful career until a few years ago, when it was dropped.

So Plymouth has kept abreast of the times, using any means that seemed to promise usefulness, ever ready to change where change was adjudged wise, ready to drop anything that in the shifting conditions had outlived its usefulness, loyal to its past, yet realising that the highest loyalty is to a future ideal rather than a past achievement. Mr. Beecher was no iconoclast, and at the same time, the past, however great and grand, as such, had no attraction for him. His eye was set on the future, a future that included the individual life and the corporate life. Present-day socialism had scarcely dawned during his day, but were he living now he would be found in line

with the broadest and the freest conceptions of society, and true to his belief that the church should lead. This not because it is an organisation, including wise men, or divinely ordered, but because it expresses in the fullest and best way the divine principles that must govern society. That this idea of his so dominated the church in its early life and has continued to control it to the present day is the true basis for confidence as to its future.

Plymouth Church will stand just so long as it represents this ideal, and applies it to all classes and conditions of men, without regard to race or creed. To-day, as of old, men of every form of belief or no belief find a welcome and find help, and many go forth with old ideas changed, new

ambitions stirred, a clearer vision of what it means to live a Christian life. If the time ever comes when that is not true, then Plymouth Church will be a relic of the past, a curiosity, to be visited by strangers as Plymouth Rock or Westminster Abbey. That that time will ever come I do not believe. However much the centres of population may change, the needs of men never change, and even if other churches should follow their constituencies to other sections, Plymouth will remain, a living monument to the truth and the life that has been from its origin its power.

THE END

Date Due